PHARMACARE NEWSLETTER

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This newsletter provides information on the PharmaCare program for British Columbia's community pharmacists. Please circulate among dispensing staff.

PharmaCare on the Web
www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/pharme

Dispensing Fees

Daily Dispensing

A reminder to pharmacy managers of the date to respond to the Ministry of Health Services on the issue of daily dispensing. A letter has been faxed to pharmacy managers (copy attached) and has been included in the Medical Services Plan Physician Newsletter. Please **respond by December 31, 2003.**

PharmaCare/PharmaNet: Policies and Procedures - Updated Manual

Version 3 of the PharmaCare/PharmaNet Policies and Procedures manual is now available on the PharmaCare Web site at **www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/pharme**. The information in Version 3 is current as of October 31, 2003.

Updates to the manual include the addition of Fair PharmaCare information and changes to other PharmaCare policies and procedures.

For your convenience, a summary of substantive updates has also been posted on the Web site. In the online manual, all significant changes are indicated by red type.

Telephone calls to the Help Desk

We are receiving an increasing number of telephone calls to the Help Desk from the public who have been provided with the pharmacy queue numbers by their pharmacist. We remind you that providing the numbers dedicated to pharmacists causes delays in the Help Desk being able to respond to pharmacist calls. The Help Desk is available 7 days a week, from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm.

The Help Desk numbers for the General Public are:

Vancouver/Lower Mainland	(604) 682-6849
Greater Victoria	(250) 952-2866
Elsewhere in the Province	1-800-554-0250

Inventory Cleared

The PharmaCare Special Authority staff have been working diligently to clear up the inventory of Special Authority applications. As of November 20th, the number of requests waiting to be processed was down 75% and the large majority of our 3400 weekly applications are currently being handled within targeted timelines. Timelines for uncomplicated requests are: 1 business day for urgent requests, 2 business days for priority requests, and 10 business days for regular requests.

We are currently working on enhancements to the Special Authority process that should result in further streamlining and improved response times.

New Staff

PharmaCare welcomes two new pharmacists to the Special Authority area. Lynn Pollock and Linda Brown began work October 27 adjudicating Special Authority requests.

Nefazodone Withdrawal

Health Canada has advised PharmaCare that nefazodone is to be withdrawn from the market due to safety concerns. Bristol-Myers Squibb and Linson Pharma agreed to withdraw their nefazodone products by November 27, 2003. Therefore, PharmaCare has removed coverage status for all nefazodone products effective November 27, 2003, for the following DINS:

Apo Nefazodone	
2242822	2242824
2242823	2242825

Gen Nefazodone	
2245202	2245204
2245203	2245205

Lin Nefazodone	
2237397	2237400

2237398	2237401
2237399	

Novo Nefazodone	
2245434	2245436
2245435	2245437

PMS Nefazodone	
2245101	2245103
2245102	2245111

Serzone	
2087294	2087391
2087375	2087405
2087383	

Special services fees

The numbers of Special Services fees paid for by PharmaCare over the past months are

DATE	NO. OF FEES
Mar 2003	2,901
Apr 2003	3,145
May 2003	2,941
Jun 2003	3,183

DATE	NO OF FEES
Jul 2003	3,381
Aug 2003	3,086
Sept 2003	3,729
Oct 2003	3,941

Addition to LCA/RDP booklet:

DIN	MAN	DRUG NAME	CORRECTION	FULL OR PARTIAL	RDP
*2242826	FRS	*Vaseretic Tab 5mg/12.5mg	Missed from publication	P*	Yes

Note P* indicates that the drug is a full benefit if an RDP special authority is in place.
RDP & REF: See reference in front of LCA/RDP Booklet.

Benefits

The following new products have been included as eligible PharmaCare benefits on Plans B, C, F and I.

DIN	MAN	DRUG NAME	Short Term	Long Term	Plan G Eligible	Palliative Care Eligible
2240908	APX	Apo-Paroxetine Tab 20mg	N	Y	Y	Y
2240909	APX	Apo-Paroxetine Tab 30mg	N	Y	Y	Y
2247751	PMS	Pms-Paroxetine Tab 20mg	N	Y	Y	Y
2247752	PMS	Pms Paroxetine Tab 30mg	N	Y	Y	Y
02245860	ALL	Lumigan® (bimatoprost) 0.03% Ophthalmic Solution	N	Y	N	N

Non benefits

PharmaCare's Drug Benefit Committee recently completed the review of the following products and recommended that these products not be added as benefits under the program.

DIN	MAN	DRUG NAME
2247750	PMS	Pms-Paroxetine Tab 10mg
2240907	APX	Apo-Paroxetine Tab 10mg
2246619	PFI	Xalacom® (latanoprost/ timolol maleate) ophthalmic solution
2240945	ABB	Tarka® (trandolapril/ verapamil hydrochloride SR) 1/240mg Tabs
2240946	ABB	Tarka® (trandolapril/ verapamil hydrochloride SR) 2/240mg Tabs
2238096	ABB	Tarka® (trandolapril/ verapamil hydrochloride SR) 2/180mg Tabs
2238097	ABB	Tarka® (trandolapril/ verapamil hydrochloride SR) 4/240mg Tabs
2241332	NNA	Vagifem® (17-beta estradiol) 25mcg Vaginal Tabs

Blood glucose test strips

The following new blood glucose strips have been assigned PINs as indicated below for individuals on Plans F and I who have a valid Blood Glucose Training Certificate

DIN	MAN	DRUG NAME
44123032	YNO	Ascensia Microfill BG Test Strip

LCA updates

New products categorized to LCA and/or RDP

The following new products under the Low Cost Alternative Program (LCA) / Reference Drug program (RDP) have been included as eligible PharmaCare benefits on Plans B, C, F, and I

DIN	MAN	DRUG NAME	FULL/ PARTIAL	LCA/RDP Price	Short Term	Long Term	Plan G Eligible	Eligible for Palliative Care
2247098	RPH	Ratio-Amcinonide	P	$0.2840	N	Y	N	N
*2240908	APX	*Apo-Paroxetine Tab 20mg	F		N	Y	Y	Y
*2240909	APX	*Apo-Paroxetine Tab 30mg	F		N	Y	Y	Y
*2247751	PMS	*Pms-Paroxetine Tab 20mg	F		N	Y	Y	Y
*2247752	PMS	*Pms-Paroxetine Tab 30mg	F		N	Y	Y	Y

***Note: These new drugs will become part of new LCA Categories effective November 27, 2003, as per the Newsletter of October 29, 2003.**

Limited coverage drugs

The following new products have been included as eligible PharmaCare benefits under the Limited Coverage Drug program on Plans B, C, F and I by special authority only (please refer to Website for criteria)

DIN	MAN	DRUG NAME	Short Term	Long Term
2246621	PFI	Bextra® (valdecoxib) 10mg Tabs	N	Y
2246622	PFI	Bextra® (valdecoxib) 20mg Tabs	N	Y
2244781	NVR	Diovan® (valsartan) 80mg Tabs	N	Y
2244782	NVR	Diovan® (valsartan) 160mg Tabs	N	Y
2246955	NVR	Diovan® (valsartan/ hydrochlorothiazide) 160mg/25mg Tabs	N	Y

Drugs under review

The following drug submissions are currently under review by the Drug Benefit Committee of PharmaCare

alfuzosin (XATRAL® 10mg tabs), resubmission	**methylphenidate hydrochloride** (CONCERTA® tabs)
anakinra (KINERET® 150mg/ml injection)	**olanzapine** (ZYPREXA® tabs), new indication
botulinum toxin (BOTOX® Injection), new indication	**oxcarbazepine** (TRILEPTAL® 150mg, 300mg, 600mg tabs)
brimonide tartrate (ALPHAGAN® 0.15% ophthalmic solution)	**peginterferon alfa-2a** (PEGASYS® 180mcg/0.5ml pre-filled syringes and 180mcg/1ml single use vials)
ciprofloxacin (CIPRO XL® 500mg modified release tabs)	**perindopril erbumine** (COVERSYL® 8mg tabs)
clopidogrel (PLAVIX® 75mg tabs), new indication	**perindopril erbumine/indapamide** (PRETERAX® 2mg/0.625mg tabs)
desmopressin (DDAVP® tabs), resubmission	**pimecrolimus** (ELIDEL® 1% cream)
donepezil (ARICEPT® 5mg and 10mg tabs), resubmission new data	**pioglitazone** (ACTOS® 15mg, 30mg and 45mg tabs) resubmission
etanercept (ENBREL® injection), new indication	**risedronate sodium** (ACTONEL® 5mg tabs), resubmission
ezetimibe (EZETROL® 10mg tabs)	**risperidone** (RISPERDAL M-TAB® 0.5mg, 1mg and 2mg orally disintegrating tabs)
fondaparinux sodium (ARIXTRA® 2.5mg injection), resubmission	**rivastigmine** (EXELON® caps), resubmission
galantamine (REMINYL® 4mg, 8mg and 12mg tabs), resubmission	**rofecoxib** (VIOXX® 25mg tabs), new indication
ganciclovir (CYTOVENE® 500mg caps)	**rosuvastatin calcium** (CRESTOR® 10mg, 20mg, 40mg tabs)
glimepiride (AMARYL® 1mg, 2mg and 4mg tabs)	**rosiglitazone** (AVANDIA® tabs), resubmission
interferon beta-1a (AVONEX® 30mcg once a week IM injectable), new indication	**tacrolimus** (PROTOPIC® 0.03% and 0.1% ointment), resubmission
irbesartan (AVAPRO® tabs), new indication	**telithromycin** (KETEK® 400mg tabs)
levetiracetam (KEPPRA® 250mg, 500mg and 750mg tabs)	**testosterone** (ANDRODERM® 2.4 3mg transdermal deliver system)
losartan (COZAAR® tabs), new indication	**tiotropium bromide** (SPIRIVA® 18 mcg caps)
methadone hydrochloride (METADOL® 1mg, 5mg, 10mg and 25mg tabs)	**vitamin and mineral supplement** (DIAPLEX®)

Drug manufacturers are required to apply to this program for possible inclusion of a new drug or indication as a PharmaCare benefit. Until the drugs indicated above have been through the routine review process, we regret that we are unable to consider inclusion of these products as eligible benefits under this program and Special Authorizations will not be provided.

Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) - Reminder of PharmaCare Criteria Changes

As of July 15, 2003, patients requiring initial or renewal Special Authority (SA) coverage of Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) were required to try treatment with rabeprazole (Pariet®) before becoming eligible for SA coverage of other PPIs.

The following individuals are not required to try rabeprazole in order to receive or maintain PharmaCare coverage of other PPIs, however trial of an H2 Blocker maybe required.

	H2 Blocker Trial Required
Children (18 years of age or under)	Yes
Pregnant patients	
Patients with specified severe, complicated conditions who are already stabilized on another PPI	No
Patients receiving short-term "triple therapy" for helicobacter pylori infections	

The following patients are required to try rabeprazole by January 14, 2003, if they wish to maintain PharmaCare coverage of a PPI:

- Patients who have an existing SA for a PPI other than rabeprazole that was in effect on July 15, 2003, and who are not specifically exempted from the policy as indicated above.

  Note: Some patients have already completed a trial of rabeprazole and were subsequently granted an indefinite SA for all other PPIs. SAs for these patients will not be affected.

If a patient experiences treatment failure or a specified intolerance to both an H_2 Block and rabeprazole, their physician may request an indefinite SA for all other PPIs.

An indefinite SA for rabeprazole has already been entered on the PharmaNet record of any patient with an SA currently in effect for a PPI. Patients will need a prescription for rabeprazole, however, the physician does not need to submit an SA request for rabeprazole.

Patients who do not qualify for exemption from the policy and who elect not to try rabeprazole will no longer have PharmaCare SA coverage of any PPI as of **January 15, 2004**.

Pharmacy Participation Agreement Termination Guidelines

According to the terms of the Participation Agreement, either party may terminate the agreement on 30 days notice. The terms of the agreement do not require cause for termination, and nothing in these guidelines restricts the ability of either party to terminate on 30 days notice.

PharmaCare has a duty to the public to deliver a responsible and accountable program. If circumstances arise which could compromise the integrity of the PharmaCare program, PharmaCare may exercise its right to terminate an agreement with a pharmacy. The following guidelines outline some of the circumstances that will result in PharmaCare considering termination.

PharmaCare may terminate the agreement if a pharmacy fails to comply or refuses to comply with the terms of the Participation Agreement or PharmaCare policies.

Some circumstances that will attract consideration for termination are as follows:

A charge of a criminal offense relating to pharmaceutical practice.

Evidence of claims submission where benefits were not provided as claimed, resulting in PharmaCare overpayments.

Evidence of erroneous claims submissions.

The pharmacy fails to cooperate with, or respond to PharmaCare Audit.

Failure to maintain and provide adequate records as required by the Participation Agreement.

Disciplinary action taken by the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia against a member.

NOTE: When a Pharmacy Participation Agreement is terminated the Ministry may publish the circumstances and the name of a pharmacy.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Daily Dispensing Letter

November 2003 450053

Dear Pharmacy Manager

It has come to my attention that the number of physician authorizations for "daily dispensing" of medications is increasing.

I understand that daily dispensing can be in the best interest of a patient's health. This practice has had good success in increasing the compliance of frail elderly patients and mental health patients, and is of great practical use in long-term care facilities.

However, the financial cost to our publicly funded PharmaCare program becomes exponential with increased use of daily dispensing. The cost of dispensing one drug for one person for 90 day's supply becomes $774 for daily dispensing instead of $8.60 for a single prescription.

There are some drugs which, and some clients who, require prescriptions for daily dispensing as a medical necessity. However, it is difficult to justify the cost to the British Columbia healthcare system of daily dispensing of, for instance, long-term medications. There is also potential for increased costs being passed along to the patients in instances where pharmacies charge dispensing fees above the current maximum accepted fee of $8.60 per prescription.

I am aware of the issues of patient compliance with dosage instructions, and at the same time aware of the need to maintain dispensing costs at a sustainable level. I respect the responsibility of physicians in making clinical decisions, and the need to identify clinical and management criteria that support each patient's best care and health outcomes. The role of community pharmacists is also critical to the issue of daily dispensing of medications.

For this reason, I am seeking your input on this issue. PharmaCare is developing a policy statement, which addresses the issue of daily dispensing. I invite your comments by December 31, 2003. Please direct your feedback to:

E-mail: hlth.pcaretrends@gems9.gov.bc.ca
Telephone: 250 952-2642
Fax: 250 952-2790
Mail: Policy Analyst
PharmaCare Policy & Program Analysis
Ministry of Health Services
2-1, 1515 Blanshard Street
Victoria, BC V8W 3C8

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Chuly
A/Executive Director
PharmaCare

p.c. British Columbia College of Pharmacists
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